



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cornell University Library receives grant to support its Eastern Wine and Grape Archive

ITHACA, NY: The Cornell University Library has received a \$23,742 grant to document the development of the grape growing and winemaking industries in New York's Finger Lakes region. The grant from the New York State Archive's Documentary Heritage Program will enable the library's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections to identify and survey records from approximately 80 wineries that dot the steep hillsides surrounding Cayuga, Seneca, and Keuka Lakes.

"Our survey will locate the historical documents-such as letters, account books, diaries, and marketing materials-that will enable scholars to write the history of grape growing and winemaking in the Finger Lakes and beyond," said Katherine Reagan, Curator of Rare Books. "This project is important to the growth of the Eastern Wine and Grape Archive at Cornell."

Cornell University established the Eastern Wine and Grape Archive in 1998 as a cooperative project between the library's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY (NYSAES). The archive contains the records and other papers of several individual growers and winemakers, including the Urbana Wine Company from 1867 to 1882; Widmer Wine Cellars from 1906 to 1963; Philip Wagner from circa 1875 to 1976; the Hammondsport Wine Company during the Prohibition years from 1920 to 1928, when they struggled to stay in business; and the influential viticulturist Nelson Shaulis during the years of his work at Cornell, 1941 to 1986.

These and other early growers and winemakers were critically important to the economic and agricultural development of the region. Their records could have relevance to scholars interested in viticulture, enology, food, agricultural economics, sociology, cultural history, or labor relations.

The archive makes up one part of the more than 300,000 rare books and 70 million manuscripts and photographs housed in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections of the Carl A. Kroch Library, a state-of-the-art special collections facility.

With more than 5,000 volumes on the subject of wine and grapes distributed among Kroch, the Frank A. Lee Library of the NYSAES, the Albert R. Mann Library, and the Nestle Library of Hotel Administration, Cornell now has one of the best concentrations on this subject in the country. Nevertheless, university archivist Elaine Engst notes that the history of New York grape growers and winemakers is under-documented. "Despite the slow and steady growth of the wine industry in New York over the past century, and explosive growth during the last decades of the 20th century, no other New York institution has an ongoing program to document the production and consumption of wine," she said.

Support and early seed money for the founding of the Archive came from the American Society for Enology and Viticulture -- Eastern Section. Hudson Cattell, the Eastern Section's representative to the Archive, emphasized the value of the Archive: "It is very important to ensure that the history of grapes and wine in the East be documented. Cornell is playing a vital role in preserving this material and making it available for future generations."

The Eastern Section continues to provide financial support for the Archive, and additional gifts have come from the New York Wine and Grape Foundation, the Vinifera Wine Growers Association, and other sources.

The Cornell University Library has used the new grant to fund an archivist for this project. The grant is expected to provide a model for continued expansion of the Eastern Wine and Grape Archive at Cornell.

Pictures are linked to hi-res scans



Cite as: This photograph from Widmer Wine Cellars is one example of the kind of documents contained in the Eastern Wine and Grape Archive. Widmer Wine Cellars Records, #3141. Provided by the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.



Cite as: This grape fruit plate drawn from Nature is one of several plates in the Eastern Wine and Grape Archive. It was lithographed and colored by Joseph Prestele. Homestead, Iowa: Amana Society, [ca. 1880]. Provided by the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

More information about the Eastern Wine and Grape Archive is available online at
<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/collections/winegrape.html>
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